

Shawn Cook-Garmyn

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517-484-2011

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House of Representatives

Families, Children and Seniors Committee

P. O. Box 30014

Lansing, MI 48909-9514

Honorable Representatives:

I am the parent of a wonderful 23 year old young man, who suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, Bi-Polar Disorder, ADHD, OCD, Anxiety Disorder and Asthma.

During Aaron's childhood years accessing mental health services was very difficult to do. Both my husband and I have always worked and both had excellent health care coverage. However having said that, our health insurance policies only permitted 12 – 24 mental health provider visits per year. Each year we would begin therapy and medication management, only to have to stop when the benefits ran out. Many times we chose to continue the services at our own cost. There were times when we were faced with paying our bills or paying for Aaron's medical care. Aaron's medical care almost always come it first, forcing our family into bankruptcy. Our pediatrician tried to maintain the medication regiment each time, however was faced with many challenges doing so. Pediatricians are not always aware of psychotropic medications or the side effects that are often accompanied with those medications.

With mental health parity, we as parents would not have had to choose between mental health treatment for our son and bankruptcy. No family should have to make these choices. Don't our children deserve the same quality medical care for mental health as a child with diabetes? I am asking you to support Mental Health Parity in addition to supporting coverage for children with Autism by including a Mental Health Parity bill with SB 414, 415, and 981.

Thank you for allowing me to share Aaron's story and taking Aaron's story and all children in the State of Michigan with Mental Health Conditions into consideration when voting on these bills.

Sincerely,

Shawn Cook-Garmyn